

Woodlawn (Morris-Cummins House)
Smyrna
Kent County
Delaware

HABS No. DEL-141

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WOODLAWN (MORRIS-CUMMINS HOUSE)

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Location: Smyrna, Kent County, Delaware

Brief Statement of Significance: This house was begun in 1741 and enlarged in 1853. The addition includes a Greek-Revival portico that is one of the more archaeologically exact examples in Delaware.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Woodlawn, at Smyrna, is the most successful piece of Greek-Revival "Temple-front" domestic architecture in Delaware. It is the Greekest in aspect of any of the houses in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties that have been affected by Hellenistic treatment.

The word "treatment" is used advisedly, for all the houses, whose exteriors bear the stamp of Greece, began life as something else. Greek-Revival "embellishment" has been applied as a process of "face-lifting."

The house now called "Woodlawn" did not get that name till 1853. In 1716 the tract on which it stands was re-surveyed and patented to James Morris, of Philadelphia, and designated "Morris Rambles." In 1741 Morris built thereon a two-story-and-attic, five-bay brick house, one room deep, with central hall and a kitchen wing at the south side. The property remained without change in the Morris family and was called Morris Rables until Elizabeth Berry Morris (James Morris's great-granddaughter) in 1853 sold it to her cousin, George Wilson Cummins.

George Wilson Cummins changed the name to Woodlawn and to the old brick west front (towards the Highway) added two rooms of wooden structure, on both ground and upper floors, to make the main body of the house two rooms deep,

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instead of one, as previously. The new facade was made of matched planking, painted white and sanded, incised with regularly-spaced lines an inch wide and nearly as deep, to simulate ashlar masonry in marble. This made an effective background for the wooden portico with its six fluted Doric columns. The little wing of matched boarding on the south side of the house is a masque to conceal the old brick kitchen wing, which is just behind it.

Prepared by Harold Donaldson Eberlein
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
June 1960

Addendum to:

Woodlawn

(Morris-Cummins House) (John England House)

Route 13, 0.3 mile south of intersection
of State Road 12

Smyrna

Kent County

Delaware

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106